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Subcommittee to testify on H.R. 3448

Fort Ticonderoga was constructed by the French on the shores of Lake Champlain in 1755 and occupied by French, British, and American troops during the 18th century. For a generation this remote post nestled between Lake Champlain and Lake George guarded the narrow water highway connecting New France with Britain's American colonies. Its very name, Ticonderoga, means "land between two waters" in Mohawk, identifying its strategic significance. Whichever nation controlled Ticonderoga controlled the continent. During the French & Indian War, Ticonderoga was the site of the bloodiest day in North American history until the American Civil War (Battle of Carillon). During the American Revolution, Fort Ticonderoga was the scene of America's first major victory in its struggle for independence, and it served as the United States' northern stronghold, protecting New York and New England from British invasion from Canada.

The Pell family acquired the grounds in 1820, beginning the legacy of the Pell family's preservation of the site, and launching one of America's earliest private preservation efforts. Museum co-founders, Sarah and Stephen Pell began the fort's restoration in 1908, the earliest of its kind in America. Their new historical vision, an expression of the Colonial Revival, helped to shape our nation's cultural identity and remembrance, pre-dating by a decade or more the establishment of the National Park Service and Colonial Williamsburg. By July 1909, the first phase of restoration was sufficiently complete for President William Howard Taft to preside at the grand opening of the museum. Since then, more than 16 million people have visited this National Historic Landmark.

The Fort Ticonderoga Association was incorporated in 1931 and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1961, among the first sites to earn that designation. Today Fort Ticonderoga is an independent, non-profit educational organization, museum, and major cultural destination. The museum preserves one of North America's largest collections of 18th-century military material culture and artillery, including original maps, manuscripts, military manuals, uniforms and artwork. The museum's world-renowned collections serve as the foundation for educational programs and the overall guest experience. Its historic landscape encompasses 2,000 acres of historic battlefields, gardens and the largest series of untouched 18th-century military earthworks surviving in North America, as well as two miles of shoreline on Lake Champlain.

Battlefields across America, like Ticonderoga, hold immense historical, cultural, and educational value. Preserving battlefield sites allows present and future generations to understand and learn from our past, ensuring that the sacrifices made, and lessons learned during these conflicts are not forgotten.

Non-profit organizations, such as The Fort Ticonderoga Association, government agencies, and private individuals work together to purchase and protect these sites. Often working together in a

critical public-private partnership, with vital funding through the American Battlefield Protection Program, the land can be safeguarded against development, ensuring its long-term preservation. Collaboration among various stakeholders is often vital for successful battlefield preservation. Collaborative efforts can pool and leverage resources, expertise, and funding to achieve common preservation goals.

Beyond the land acquisition of historic battlefields, additional funding made possible through sources such as The American Battlefield Protection program provides critical support to interpret battlefields. These programs engage and inspire audiences of all ages. Archaeological investigations, when appropriate, provide valuable insights into the tactics, equipment, and lives of those who fought on the hallowed ground. Conservation and preservation efforts ensure that the artifacts and structures are properly documented, protected, and made available to the public for research and educational programs. Additional funding is critical to help monitor sites, maintain trails and infrastructures, manage visitor access, and implement sustainable practices to minimize environmental impact.

I applaud Congresswoman Stefanik for her leadership supporting important historic preservation programs, including sponsoring HR3448. She has been a constant champion of our nation's history. Congresswoman Stefanik recently assisted Fort Ticonderoga ensuring that 250th funding is accessible to non-profits, in addition to government owned historic sites.

HR3448, The American Battlefield Program Enhancement Act, will help strengthen the program for years to come by allowing non-profits and tribes, in addition to government entities, to directly apply to ABPP grants. By expanding the eligibility for funding, the entities will be able to move quickly, often in urgent situations, to preserve endangered battlefields. This much-needed modification will make this critical program even more efficient and effective.

The Enhancement Act will allow organizations, such as The Fort Ticonderoga Association to apply directly to ABPP for grant funding, leveraging the power of individual donor and foundation support, matched by federal funding. Public/private partnerships are critical to historic preservation efforts.

The American Battlefield Program Enhancement Act will ensure that the grant program is nimble and successful, maximizing its potential as a critical means of battlefield preservation. As our nation approaches our national 250th commemoration of the American Revolution, we must take this opportunity to expand resources, mobilize partnerships, and ensure that our nation's hallowed grounds are preserved for posterity.